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10 January 1961

PIC
HisHISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIAPHOTOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE CENTER1. History

The evolution of formal photographic intelligence activity in CIA started in 1952 when a small group of less than 20 highly experienced photo intelligence specialists was organized. This organization not only assisted in the solution of a wide range of CIA intelligence problems but also engaged in planning the development of a photographic intelligence activity so manned, equipped, and organized as to be able to handle large volumes of photography and the provision therewith of reports, briefings, graphics, technical support and operational assistance in the solution of a wide range of problems of highest importance to the national intelligence effort. The emphasis from the very beginning was directed toward providing materials and services of common concern to the whole U.S. intelligence effort.

In January 1955 concentrated planning and actions were directed toward the task of centrally and initially handling the large volume of high quality overflight photography expected from the U-2 Program scheduled to begin in early 1956. Project HEAUTOMAT, later designated the CIA Photographic Intelligence Center, was established in the Steuart Building in N.W. Washington, D. C.

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Since June 1956 CIA/PIC has been operating continuously and frequently around-the-clock in handling millions of frames of highly classified aerial photography, ground photography, and most recently satellite photography centrally and initially for the entire U. S. military and civilian intelligence community. Supporting CIA/PIC during this period have been approximately [redacted] Army and [redacted] Navy personnel on a full-time basis and [redacted] Air Force personnel on a part-time basis.

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2. Development of the CIA/PIC Pattern of Joint Activities and Services of Common Concern as a Basis for the National P.I. Center Concept

To a substantial measure CIA/PIC has been rendering a national photographic intelligence function by virtue of its joint activities in closest collaboration with Army, Navy, CIA, and NSA elements and, to a lesser extent, with Air Force in the exploitation of [redacted]

Joint activities and services performed by CIA/PIC have included but not been limited to the following:

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a. Coordinate and participate in the joint production of photographic intelligence in support of national intelligence objectives. To date, 375 Joint and 990 CIA photo intelligence reports have been published.

b. Conduct briefings for top echelon U.S. Government officials including the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as leaders of foreign governments. (In the past, these briefings plus those given to USIB members and senior military and civilian officials of the government have averaged over 100 per year.)

c. Provide necessary support for overseas tactical intelligence reporting.

d. Provide aerial plots, film evaluations, monthly accessions lists and selected operational reports.

e. Provide photogrammetric services and related mensural analysis support.

f. Provide collateral research and reference, graphic, photo laboratory and reproduction services in support of the foregoing.

g. Provide special security services including the central point of control for sensitive security systems.

h. Provide a central repository for original negatives obtained by the U-2 and satellite intelligence collection systems as well as all intelligence products derived therefrom.

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1. Coordinate and administer a joint procurement program of highly specialized and costly photographic and electronic exploitation equipment.

j. Assist CIA and appropriate DOD components in planning for future programs involving new collection systems.

3. Conclusion:

The U-2 Program in the judgment of most our leaders has been the most productive intelligence program ever embarked upon by the U.S. Few, if any, have had any criticisms of the CIA/PIC joint intelligence reporting and handling of the activities and services of common concern. In fact, dozens of commendations have been received in CIA from satisfied consumers ranging from the White House and U.S. military commands to Foreign governments. Most recently the Kirkpatrick Report has confirmed the fact that CIA has already demonstrated its ability to run an interagency photographic center.

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Recommendation for Creation of a National Photographic Intelligence Center

The main arguments for the creation of such a center as a CIA service of common concern, with Director to be appointed by the Director of Central Intelligence with the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense after consultation with USIB, include the following:

1. The present system has worked well on both TALENT and KEYHOLE missions. This proposal merely gives formal sanction to a proven arrangement which has been satisfactory to JCS, Department of Defense and other major intelligence consumers.
2. The military services' legitimate interests and needs for photo intelligence work in targeting, charting, etc., will remain unaffected.
3. The DCI, with his statutory and Presidential responsibility for intelligence affecting the national security, should have the prime responsibility for this critically important intelligence facility. Any other solution would fragment intelligence authority.
4. The Army and the Navy are already fully integrated in PIC and the Air Force has long had an open invitation to join. Conversely, the JCS and the Department of Defense have never integrated CIA in institutions under their control (NSA and WSEG).
5. The most experienced photo interpreters with the greatest continuity in the business are in CIA. They have enabled CIA to set the pace for the community in developing PI techniques and in

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research and development on advanced equipment.

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7. Concentrated study and exploitation by highly trained personnel using expensive equipment is necessary to derive key answers to intelligence questions from this material. A facility manned jointly by experts from the intelligence community as a whole gives best hope of continuing success.

8. Such a center must be in the Washington Area to provide for briefing key officials and to permit collaboration between experts of the intelligence community's research organizations and the photo interpreters. Economical but adequate facilities for the P. I. center can be developed in an available building in the Naval Gun Factory.